

Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities: State and Regional AgrAbility Projects

FY 2010 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Dec. 18, 2009



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM FOR FARMERS WITH DISABILITIES: STATE AND REGIONAL AGRABILITY PROJECTS

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.500**.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **Dec. 18, 2009** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applicants are encouraged to submit earlier than the posted deadline to alleviate any potential technical errors with electronic submission. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities: State and Regional AgrAbility Projects RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities (AgrAbility) – State and Regional AgrAbility Projects for fiscal year (FY) 2010 to increase the likelihood that farmers, ranchers, farm workers, or farm family members with disabilities and their farms experience success. NIFA anticipates approximately \$4.3 million will be available for support of AgrAbility in FY 2010. NIFA anticipates approximately \$2.3 million will be available to fund new state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPs), and the remainder will be used to support the National AgrAbility Project and SRAPs eligible for continuation via separate RFAs.

This notice identifies the objectives for AgrAbility, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an

AgrAbility Project grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

The AgrAbility program is authorized under the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, as amended (7 U.S.C. 341 et seq.) and in Section 1680 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5933), as amended. Section 7403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) amends section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 [7 U.S.C. 343(d)] regarding eligibility. The AgrAbility program is funded through the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-80). Beginning in FY 1995, the eligibility to compete for AgrAbility funding was broadened to include 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University at any appropriated level. Beginning in FY 2009, the eligibility to compete for AgrAbility funding was further broadened to include the University of the District of Columbia.

B. Purpose and Priorities

AgrAbility increases the likelihood that individuals with disabilities and their families engaged in production agriculture (AgrAbility's customers) become more successful. The program supports cooperative projects in which State Cooperative Extension Services (CES) based at either 1862 or 1890 Land-Grant Universities or the University of the District of Columbia subcontract to private, non-profit disability organizations. Measures of success may include improvements in customers' financial stability or access to life activities and in the capacity of the states and regions to deliver services this population requires in a timely and satisfying manner.

To address the specialized needs of AgrAbility's customers, the program builds service capacity on national, regional, state, and local levels through **education** and **networking**. In the absence of capacity, projects provide **assistance** to customers. The primary function of the National AgrAbility Project is to support the state and regional projects in developing their capacity to meet these objectives. AgrAbility Projects use marketing activities to direct the public to initiatives in these three priority areas, described below:

1. Education

Education comprises AgrAbility's long-term investment strategy. The program has particular interest in funding educational activities with the following elements:

- (a) Within the context of production agriculture, learning objectives focus on accommodating disabilities and avoiding secondary injuries in persons with disabilities;
- (b) Audience includes health, farm, and government service providers;
- (c) Delivery formats include eXtension, authoring or adapting printable resources, live presentations taught in-person or remotely, and recorded presentations that may encourage audience interaction; and
- (d) Means to appraise instructive efficacy.

2. Networking

Networking depends on education; but networking will eventually make AgrAbility sustainable. The program has particular interest in funding networking activities with the following elements:

- (a) Objectives encourage the sharing of information among, and the provision of services, value, or funds from, individuals or organizations not employed by AgrAbility;
- (b) Partners include customers, peer supporters, volunteer groups, university student groups, stakeholders and public and private funding organizations;
- (c) Delivery formats include the donation of goods and services of direct benefit to AgrAbility customers; and
- (d) Means to appraise economic value of services rendered to AgrAbility and its customers.

3. Assistance

Assistance satisfies customers' immediate needs that are inadequately addressed by health, farm, and government service providers. This program has particular interest in funding assistance activities with the following elements:

- (a) Objectives focus on individualized consultative services that increase the likelihood that AgrAbility Project customers and their farm operations experience success;
- (b) Audience includes AgrAbility customers and others working at the same farms;
- (c) Delivery formats include product selection advice, accessibility and ergonomic recommendations, life activities and farm operations planning guidance, and advocacy to obtain service and financial aid. Assistance can occur in person or from a distance; and
- (d) Means to appraise successes experienced following intervention.

4. Marketing

Marketing does not address education, networking, or assistance objectives but may make key audiences aware of an AgrAbility Project and its initiatives. Appropriate marketing activities have the following elements:

- (a) Objectives concentrate on program or project awareness to the exclusion of information required to provide education, assistance, or facilitate networking;
- (b) Audience includes everyone;
- (c) Delivery formats include public appearances with displays and the production or distribution of program awareness materials, press releases, public service announcements, print advertisements, Web pages with awareness content, newsletters, or electronic notices; and
- (d) Means to link these activities with registration, information and consultation requests, and networking successes.

C. Program Area Description

Program Code Name: AgrAbility

Program Code: LQ

The AgrAbility program encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (http://about.extension.org/mediawiki/files/5/51/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_-_March_14%2C_2006_-_YEAR_2.pdf). This content is for end users, as opposed to staff development, and must align with the eXtension Implementation Plan (available at <http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning>). Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (COPs) (http://about.extension.org/wiki/Glossary_of_eXtension_Terms#Community_of_Practice_.28CoP.29;) or form new COPs that focus on agricultural safety and health. For examples of developing COPs and guidance on forming COPs, see http://cop.extension.org/wiki/Main_Page.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. In FY 2010, NIFA anticipates approximately \$4.3 million will be available for support of AgrAbility. Of this amount, NIFA anticipates approximately \$2.3 million will be available to fund new State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs). The remainder will be used to support the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) and the SRAPs eligible for continuation. Applications for the NAP and for continuation of SRAPs will be solicited under a separate RFA.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2010, applications may be submitted to the AgrAbility Program as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the AgrAbility Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the AgrAbility Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary. Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

In FY 2010, the AgrAbility project has established a maximum award size of \$180,000. Applications requesting more than the maximum will not be considered for funding. Total project periods may not exceed four (4) years.

Funding Estimate FY 2010	Number of New Awards Anticipated FY 2010	Estimated Minimum Award	Estimated Maximum Award
\$2.3 million	10-13	\$150,000	\$180,000

A separate RFA will be issued for the NAP to solicit continuation applications from eligible SRAPs. AgrAbility supports two project types, NAPs and SRAPs. In FY 2010, NIFA is not soliciting applications for a new NAP, but plans to continue funding the NAP and SRAPs eligible for continuation and approximately ten to thirteen new SRAPs. However, since SRAPs can improve their chances of success by cooperating with the NAP, both project types are explained below.

1. State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs)

SRAPs operate within a geographic area defined on the basis of counties, states, or both. SRAPs may function independently of each other. States with insufficient potential clientele to merit individual AgrAbility projects may submit regional, multi-state proposals. At a minimum, the CES primary applicant must subcontract to one private, non-profit disability organization. Applicants proposing to serve remote or diverse potential customer populations may wish to form partnerships that include one or more land-grant institutions, non-land-grant institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, or additional, private non-profit disability organizations to effectively serve the entire qualifying population.

SRAPs receive support from, and submit documentation and reports to, the NAP. NIFA views the relationship between the SRAPs and the NAP as critical to the success of AgrAbility. Prior to applying, applicants should contact the current NAP for detailed information concerning standard operating procedures, best field practices, and access to the NAP's library of AgrAbility-related instructional materials (see PART II, C. 2. for contact information).

SRAP applicants may propose projects (with budgets for a maximum duration of four years. The project period should begin approximately April 1, 2010. FY 2010 appropriations will fund the awarded project's first-year budget. Each project may submit a request for at most \$180,000 per year for each year of funding requested. Funding levels will be adjusted based on technical review of the projects. Multi-year funding will depend on the availability of funds and the demonstration of satisfactory progress. Thus, all proposals must include specific, measurable accomplishments for each project year.

SRAP commitments include: attending annual, three-day, national training workshops with at least one representative from each of the primary university and non-profit disability organization partners (2 person minimum); participating in NAP-initiated efforts to collect activity data; and submitting annual and final reports to NIFA (see Part VI, D.). Applicants may request funds to pay for these commitments.

2. The National AgrAbility Project (NAP)

In FY 2012, NIFA anticipates soliciting for new NAP applications. The NAP has a dual mission. The NAP provides limited, on-demand SRAP-type services in geographic areas without SRAPs. But more significant to the success of the program, the NAP helps SRAPs become more successful at meeting their objectives. The NAP typically produces or recommends the education materials or forums, networking tactics, assistance protocols, and marketing products SRAPs adopt for their own use. The NAP connects all SRAPs by: moderating information sharing forums; identifying, promoting, and addressing opportunities and challenges for AgrAbility; recognizing and capitalizing on economies of scale; and evaluating the program's impacts annually.

NIFA views the relationship between SRAPs and the NAP as critical to the delivery of a successful AgrAbility program. Because SRAPs symbiotically interact with the NAP, failure to comply with the NAP's operating, documentation, and reporting requirements will result in the NAP suspending service to the non-compliant SRAP. Prior to applying, applicants should contact the NAP for detailed information concerning standard operating procedures and best field practices.

Beginning in FY 2008, Purdue University, in partnership with Goodwill Industries International Inc. and the Arthritis Foundation serves as the NAP. Applicants may contact the National AgrAbility Project; c/o Purdue University; Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering; 225 S. University St.; West Lafayette, IN 47907-2093 Voice/TT (800) 825-4264; Fax: (765) 496-1356; Web: <http://www.agrability.org>.

The national training workshop educates project personnel in addition to the standard education audience. The workshop may serve several roles, including new staff orientation, staff development, forums for discussing pressing issues and project progress, successes and failures, and presentation of reports of interest to the entire program.

All delivery formats, training and educational programs should be marketed as the AgrAbility Project and use the AgrAbility logo (see below). Other branding on any materials produced though this grant requires consent of the NIFA program contact.



PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by Cooperative Extension at 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University, at 1862 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, and the University of the District of Columbia. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will preclude NIFA from reviewing their application or making an award.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching or cost sharing support for this program, and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA.

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR) (also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AR should see

http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,**” enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-002651** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

- Grants.gov customer support
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).
Email: support@grants.gov

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., attachments must be in portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Non-PDF documents will not be reviewed by the panel. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on <http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFAGrants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 6. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the objectives of AgrAbility.

b. Field 7. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed twenty (20) pages of written text regardless of whether it is single or double spaced and up to five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (twenty five (25) pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

(1) Project Justification (30pts)

Justify the need for the project clearly and concisely by describing its magnitude and scope. Provide current baseline data including incidence of injuries and disease in the farming population. For all estimates included, explain and substantiate any assumptions

made. Review current related programs concentrating on limitations this application intends to address. Justify the applicants' ability to provide these services by detailing the applicants' accomplishments from similar projects. Describe the stakeholders' role in defining the application's scope and their future role in project planning.

In addition to the information stated above, currently and recently (within the past five (5) years) funded projects must include: a brief history of their program; baseline data on clients served, site visits/assessments made and the data trends over time; and a narrative describing the impact of the SRAP on the respective state and clients. Applicants proposing a SRAP that was not previously funded or funded greater than five (5) years ago should include: a description of planning steps taken to formulate the project (i.e. discussions with funded SRAPs, the NAP, stakeholders, etc.); and a narrative indicating how the SRAP will meet the needs of the population described earlier in the project justification.

All proposed projects must also detail the justification and/or reason for selection of the non-profit disability partner.

(2) Work Plan (35pts)

Objectives must address each of the priority areas listed in Part I, B; within the context of the NAP vision enumerated in Part II, C. 2. Use an outline format for this section with objectives as primary headings. Objectives should have measurable outcomes, with quantitative or qualitative evaluation plans, as appropriate. Denote activities required to achieve each objective. Group these activities by the targeted accomplishment year. Organize the objectives and their activities in a logical sequence, the sum of which must comprise an attainable project within the four-year maximum duration. For example, achievement targets for number of on-farm assessments or educational activities may increase each year. An educational module may be developed in year one, pilot-tested in year two, and presented in year three. Under each activity, list expected outcomes and describe the proposed means of evaluating the activity's efficacy and any outcomes' value to stakeholders. The plan should allow evaluation results to refine and adjust objectives and activities while informing future plans. Use a logic model or a summary table at the end of this section to show the relationships between objectives (and the activities designed to attain the objectives), indicators of objective achievement and desired outcomes, and the data sources which will inform evaluations. Thus, this table should have a minimum of three rows, at least one for each objective, and three columns.

(3) Division of Labor (15pts)

CES and non-profit disability organization components may jointly or individually provide leadership for different objectives. Define the responsibilities of the respective organizations under each objective. For each activity, include time frames, personnel, and their roles. Applicants may consult with SRAPs, the current NAP, or consumer advisory type groups in developing their cooperators' role assignments.

(4) Management Plan (10pts)

Provide an explanation of how the relationship between the institution and the non-profit disability partner will be managed. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight

provided by the institution and the non-profit disability partner. Briefly explain the institution's funds management strategy for funded projects. The funds management outlined in the Management Plan for AgrAbility must comply with all administrative and national policy requirements listed in PART VI, C. of this RFA; and

Provide time lines or Gantt charts to demonstrate the duration and the sequence of project activities. Use varied hatching for different cooperators. Chart against a quarterly scale, so that a schedule should depict no more than 16 quarters.

c. Field 11. Other Attachments.

(1) Collaborative Arrangement. Formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of application, vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by AR) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information, including rate of pay, for consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.

(2) Appendices to Project Narrative. Appendices to the Project Narrative are limited to letters of support and information described in the previous paragraph. Electronic grant submission does not allow for removal of any content of the grant application.

Applications containing letters of support from elected officials in the application cannot be reviewed by the peer panel and the application will be at risk of being excluded from NIFA review.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. If completing the information, **do not enter any data in the field requesting the social security number.**

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “AgrAbility”) and the program code (i.e., enter “LQ”).

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. A conflict of interest list is required under this program.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

An error free application must be received by Grants.gov by close of business (COB) **Friday, Dec. 18, 2009** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applicants are encouraged to submit a minimum of two business days earlier than the posted deadline to alleviate any potential technical errors with electronic submission. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the Authorized Representative has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 15 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA), as amended, 7 U.S.C. 3319, **indirect costs and tuition remission are not allowable costs under Section 3(d) of Smith-Lever funded projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose.** Costs that are a part of an institution's indirect cost pool (e.g., administrative or clerical salaries) may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or Extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Unallowable costs include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

1. Entertainment Costs not permitted include banquets, award ceremonies, and meals for persons not traveling on behalf of the project except when provided to maintain the continuity of a meeting, tickets to shows or sporting events, and alcoholic beverages.
2. Awards and Certificates of Achievement are disallowed by OMB Circular, A-21—Cost Principles for Educational Institutions.

3. Facility Costs not permitted include the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

4. Tuition Remission is prohibited by Section 1473 of NARETPA, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3319).

5. Any expense not directly related to the program or project is considered unallowable. Examples include child-care services, kitchen help hired to prepare refreshments, and promotional or appreciation gifts such as clothing, coffee mugs, or bags.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.”

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Project Justification (30%)

- a) Project scope adequately addresses program priorities in education, networking, and assistance (listed in Part I, B.) (10%);
- b) Included baseline data on potential AgrAbility customers and audiences seem current and accurate; description of current programs available in the state or region adequately conveys a lack of capacity; marketing efforts described seem likely to engage target populations (10%);
- c) Project description for previously funded projects includes brief history of program, provides baseline data and trends on clients served, accomplishments (as described in Part IV). Project description for projects not previously funded includes description of planning process, interaction with other SRAPs and the NAP, and indicates how the proposed SRAP would benefit the clientele (10%);

2. Work Plan (35%)

- a) Work Plan objectives succinctly and sequentially summarize key milestones necessary to achieve project goals and desired outcomes (10%);
- b) Work Plan objectives seem clear, suitable, and feasible with respect to the following (25%):
 - (i) Techniques, procedures, and methodologies;
 - (ii) Data collection, analysis, and means of interpretation through utilization of questionnaires, surveys and/or evaluation instrumentation;
 - (iii) Expected results or outcomes; and
 - (iv) Procedures for evaluating project efficacy, including fixed performance indices with probabilities for obtaining them.

3. Division of Labor (15%)

- a) Project personnel have distinctly defined roles and demonstrate sufficient expertise, competence, time commitment and access to adequate facilities to complete project, while the PD appears sufficiently familiar with Institutional Review Board processes and has adequately considered human subject safeguards (10%);
- b) Selection of additional subcontractors and entities with whom the project intends to cooperate and the division of responsibilities assigned to each partner collectively position project for success (5%);

4. Management Plan (10%)

- a) Management Plan for institutions, subcontractors, and NIFA is clear and appropriate. Responsibilities are logically and appropriately assigned (5%);
- b) Project Schedule systematically organizes tasks, illustrates successor task dependence, and allocates sufficient time for each task (5%); and

5. Budget (10%)

Budget apportions funds appropriately given scope of project; budget forms comply with instructions; amounts are allocated and tallied correctly; narrative provides adequate justification in each budget category used.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining

conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles (2 CFR 215, 2 CFR 220 and 2 CFR 230), and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015, 3019 and 3430 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 215—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

2 CFR Part 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (2 CFR Parts 220 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and 7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—NIFA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh-Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

1. Outputs

Grantees must make every effort to ensure that the project participants with disabilities can access the materials and services offered to them and their families. It is recommended that materials be in accessible formats, delivery of education and services be in accessible locations, World Wide Web materials comply with criteria in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794(d)), and the CES or private, non-profit disability organization be accessible via Telephone Device for the Deaf. In accordance with NIFA General Terms and Conditions – A, Item No. 16, “Sharing of Findings, Data, and Other Project Products,” the grantee will submit half of the required copies of articles, educational publications, and audio-visual products to the program contact at NIFA and half to the NAP. Audio-visual products include software and database applications. Grantees need not submit confidential materials, but should endeavor to eliminate the confidential aspects of such materials where appropriate to allow sharing.

2. Reporting

Grantees are required to submit initial project information, annual and final reports, and progress reports for continuation grants via NIFA's Current Research Information System (CRIS) <http://cwf.uvm.edu/cris>. Funded projects will be encouraged to report activities addressing the needs of veterans with disabilities.

CRIS is an electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. For applications recommended for funding, instructions on preparation and submission of project documentation will be provided to the applicant by the agency contact. Documentation must be submitted to CRIS before NIFA funds will be released. Project reports will be requested by the CRIS office when required. For more information about CRIS, visit <http://cris.nifa.usda.gov>.

Annual project reports will be requested simultaneously with the continuation funding application request each year. Untimely submission of these reports may delay processing of the award and failure to submit these reports will likely result in the restriction of the subsequent funding increment. Upon solicitation of continuation award application requests, a current CRIS report must be available in the NIFA CRIS system.

Awardees will need to assign codes and percentages to classify their projects. The primary knowledge areas AgrAbility addresses are (1) KA 723, Hazards to Human Health and Safety; (2) KA 801, Individual and Family Resource Management; and, (3) KA 802, Human Development and Well-Being. The primary subjects of investigation AgrAbility targets are (1) SOI 6010, Individuals; (2) SOI 6020, Families; and (3) SOI 6050, Communities. The primary fields of science AgrAbility utilizes include (1) FOS 2020, Engineering; (2) FOS 3020, Education; and FOS 3100, Management. A complete list of CRIS codes and explanations appears on the Web at <http://cwf.uvm.edu/cris/revman/manvi.htm>.

Awardees in need of assistance should contact the CRIS Office c/o Ms. Carolyn Deckers at 202-690-0009 or through e-mail at cdeckers@nifa.usda.gov or cris@nifa.usda.gov. For more information about CRIS visit <http://cris.nifa.usda.gov>.

At the end of the grantee's final year, the grantee must prepare a final report to NIFA that summarizes all significant activities that supported the project's goals and objectives. Organize final reports by objectives and deliverables identified in the proposal. Provide tables to facilitate comparing targeted results with actual results, aggregated for the entire project. List all educational materials produced by the project. Provide suggestions for improving the administration of AgrAbility or recommendations to guide other professionals initiating an AgrAbility project. Reports must be received by CRIS within 90 days of the final project year's end.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Mr. Bradley Rein, National Program Leader for AgrAbility; Plant and Animal Systems Unit; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-0151; fax: (202) 401-5179; e-mail: brein@nifa.usda.gov or Ms. Emily Morehouse; Program Specialist; Plant and Animal Systems Unit; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-6825; fax: (202) 401-5179; e-mail: emorehouse@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of

amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program (Weblink: [7 CFR 3430 General definitions](#)).

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definitions are applicable:

Director means the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and any other officer or employee of the NIFA to whom the authority involved is delegated.